

BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Nigeria is a plural and segmented society in all its ramifications. The federation is composed of people with different ethnic, religious, racial and cultural backgrounds. This heterogeneous composition of the state has been responsible for the internal conflicts. The thrust of this study is an analysis of the nexus between national integration and the Boko Haram insurgency. Therefore, it seeks to explain and analyse the nature and character of Nigerian state. The study argues that, in the quest for national integration, the nation must contend with the problem of integrating her numerous and diverse ethnic groups that constitute the federation. Methodologically, the study adopts conflict analysis as its theoretical framework while relying on secondary sources as methods of data collection. In realistic context, the study establishes that, the internal conflict experienced by Nigeria since independence was as a result of socio-political, economic and ethnic cleavages caused by failed leadership. It concludes that, the state of insecurity in Nigeria, no doubt, threatened the very fabric of national integration and created the ecology of fear, disquiet and anxiety. To solve these problematic issues, it recommends that, national integration will be a mirage, unless and until, the political culture is well nurtured, intensive and extensive public enlightenment campaign is embarked on, adequate national orientation education is achieved when youth empowerment scheme is put in place and poverty problem is solved.

Keywords: National integration, Boko Haram, Nigeria, Insurgency, Ethnicity

Introduction

Since her political independence in 1960, Nigeria has continued to grapple with the problem of national unity; such that she can be described as nation with a tripod stand, made up of three blocs; the North, the West and the East, that are in a perpetual state of Wobble. While national unity has continued to elude efforts that have been made to achieve it, such unity is considered necessary for development programmes to yield expected fruits (Ibodje, 2007: 119). One stimulating thing about the Nigerian state is its unity in diversity aside the naturally endowed resources that are scattered all over the country. The people of Nigeria are extra-ordinary in both physical and cultural characteristics. But, still, it is this diversity that is often the source of political, ethnic and religious violence (Arazeem, 2005: 144). The war in the North-East arising from the *Boko Haram* insurgency is not abating. Thousands of innocent people have been killed. Several other thousands have fled the region after their homes and properties were destroyed. The economy of the region has been destroyed. The abduction of over 200 innocent school girls since April 14, from their dormitory at Government Secondary School, Chibok in Borno State by Boko Haram raised the pitch in the fratricidal war. The conflict in North eastern Nigeria has ripple affects across the entire North in particular and the country in general (Onyekakeyah, 2014:17). The coordinated attacks by the sect across the country have posed a serious security threat to lives and properties of Nigerian and endanger the unity and corporate existence of the Nigerian state. Terrorism was until the escalation of Boko Haram's heinous activities very alien to Nigeria.

One of the most dreadful fallouts of *Boko Haram* bombings and killings was the fear that the hatred it has so far generated which ultimately endanger the continued existence of Nigeria as one nation. For instance, millions of non-indigenes in the traditional flash points of Boko Haram activities, especially the Igbos were desperate to return to their home states before they are killed. The Ibo resident in Kano is living with fear and apprehension. Though there are few of us who like to stay and defend ourselves, the majority of us, particularly women and children numbering over three million are jostling to leave the north because unfolding events indicate that the north is no longer safe for easterners. Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Kano, hereby calls on the governors of the eastern states and the south-south to provide means of transportation with adequate security to evacuate our brethren who would want to leave because human life is precious and should be protected as such. This is an indication that Boko Haram insurgency has not only threatened the polity but also the very existence of the Nigerian nation.

The northerners resident in the eastern states were also threatened in the wake of the wanton killings and of property in many parts of the north and fled the areas with their families. Similarly, many National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) members of southern origin have been rejecting their post to north while those already serving there besieged the commission's headquarters in Abuja daily seeking re-deployment from states in the north. Boko Haram offensives have targeted churches to exacerbate sectarian differences between the Christian south and Muslim north: and also government security and financial institutions to undermine the Goodluck Jonathan administration. The insurgency has increased insecurity across the country leading President Goodluck Jonathan to declare a state of emergency in December, 2011 covering 15 local government areas across the north. Also, in May, 2013, another state of emergency was declared in three states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa in the north eastern Nigeria. This followed the increased tempo of Boko Haram hostilities in the affected states.

Federalism and the Nigerian State

Of all problems confronting Nigeria at independence that of forging national unity and integration was particularly acute. The historical background to the attainment of Independence were such that one cannot really talk of Nigeria as one united nation. This was in spite of the fact that there was much talk from the leading political figures about unity being a prerequisite for national development and integration. Furthermore, the contradictions prevalent at the birth of Independent were quite fundamental, e.g. the disparity in the economies of the regions, the seeds of the neo-colonial economy already planted by Colonialism. There was also the contradiction of a secular polity in a predominantly religious society as well as the contradiction of religious pluralism and sectarianism (Umar, 1989:77).

Federalism as has been adopted in Nigeria found its way into the political arena during the colonial era. The concept is closely related to the various social base on coordinative, rather than sub-coordinative relationship. It emphasizes partnership among parties of equal claims to legitimacy who seek a common social order. Speaking about Nigeria federalism, two school of thought emerged on its evaluation. The first school comprising of the Nationalist believed that British imposed federalism on Nigeria in order to maintain the neo-colonial control of the country after the lowering of the mantle. Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1968) a convinced federalist described the British imposed federal structure as an abominable destructive and divisive British

heritage. They also believed that the colonial power made sure that there was enough structural imperfection left behind to bedevil inter-ethnic relations after independence. However, this view of imposition held by this school is not exactly objective as Nigerians involved gave consent for her to become a federal state. The second school of thought is of the opinion that historical and geographical factors determine the political evolution of Nigerian federalism. Nigeria, being a large and culturally variegated country could not have been governed for a long time from one centre (Akinyemi, 1979). This view is not quite correct, as it is time that factors of history and geography more than anything else determines the constitutional evolution of Nigeria.

Nigeria's present geographic boundaries were established in 1914 with the amalgamation of the two contiguous British Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria. Designed largely to ensure the financial viability of the British Colonial Project through the economic unification of the relatively poor but larger-Northern Protectorate with its more prosperous southern neighbor, amalgamation did not engender genuine integration among the disparate communities encompassed within Nigeria's artificial boundaries. Rather rising ethnic and regional antagonisms within the new Nigerian state necessitated the progressive decentralization of the polity, leading ultimately in 1954 to the establishment of a three –region federal system, which survived into independence in 1960. The three-unit federal structure was designed to grant regional autonomy and hegemony to the country's three major ethnic groups, namely, the Muslim Hausa-Fulani of the Northern Region, the Christian Igbo in the South east (Eastern Region) and the religiously bi-communal Yoruba in the Southwest (Western Region) (Suberu, 2004:3 – 4).

The three-region federal structure, which became a four region structure with the creation of the mid-west in 1963, failed to secure Nigeria's unity in diversity, however. Rather, fundamental structural flaws in the design of the federal system contributed heavily to the collapse of Nigeria's first post-independence democratic republic (1960 – 66) and to bloody ethno-military infighting, including the outbreak of civil war in 1967. These flaws included: the overwhelming size, population, voting strength and political dominance of the Northern Region, which by official census data contained over half of the country's population and more than two-thirds of its territory; the division of the federation into only three or four large regions, which robbed the political system of the fluidity and flexibility that could have resulted from a larger number of

smaller constituent units; the denial of constituent units to the ethnic minorities, who constituted about a third of the population of each of the ethnic majority-dominated regions and who violently resisted their inequitable incorporation into regional system, as evidenced in the 1962-64 Tiv riots in the Northern Region; and the erection of the federation's boundaries around the country's major tripartite ethnic fault-lines, leading to hegemonic ethnocentrism and secessionism on the part of the "big three" (Suberu, 2004: 4 – 5).

The General Yakubu Gowon administration dreamed of national integration through the establishment of unifying schemes: unity schools, two in each state of the federation (One for boys and the other for girls) with a view to bringing together young people of various ethnic groups so as to develop a bond of oneness and unity; and the National youth Service Corps (NYSC). Successive governments have tried to maintain this effort even though the unity school scheme has generated problems in that there are discriminatory crimes in favour of the so-called educationally disadvantaged states in the north. This has caused some ill feeling but, despite this negative aspect, the schools still exist as part of the process of integration.

The NYSC scheme started in 1973 with a view to making graduates of tertiary institutions have one-year service in states other than their own, so as to foster national unity and integration. This scheme has, to a large measure, justified its establishment and has helped in bridging manpower gaps in many states. In any act of war, the youth always suffer and the establishment of the NYSC scheme was partly for them to expedite reconciliation, which was to bring those who suffered the ravages of war back into the fold. Rehabilitation on its part involved the mobilization of human and material resources in a massive social programme geared toward deliberate enhancement of the quality of life of the affected citizens. As Adebayo Adedeji, the pioneer chairperson of the NYSC, has himself remarked:

We had put a lot of emphasis on educating and re-educating Nigerians about the imperative of nation-building, national unity, our common heritage and the tremendous opportunities which our diversity offers their civic responsibilities, the emergence of a Nigerian ideology based on a consensus on values such as human dignity and freedom; justice, fair play and respect for the law; honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability; and, toughness, determination, steadfastness in duty and resilient inner strength. These are the values and characteristics that make a nation great

when they are commonly shared and practiced by the generality of its people and subsequently became internalized. But most fundamental to the growth of these values is the existence of an enabling environment and the right leadership at all levels of society whose examples motivates and inspires their followers. 'Do as I do, not as I say is the only basis for sound and honest leadership (Odunuga, 1999:250).

The military also evolved policies like "quota system" and 'federal character' for the purpose of admission into institutions and appointments into important positions of government, ostensibly to give every ethnic group a sense of belonging. But the policies were frequently manipulated or sometimes jettisoned in order to service narrow parochial political interests. The story is also the same for the handling of religious matters. While constantly echoing the secular nature of the Nigerian state, many of the military rulers were actually giving covert and overt support to a particular religion. This is best illustrated by Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) (Ajayi, 1990:8). The fallout was frequent religious crises, which threatened to pull the country apart on several occasions. The ruthless application of the coercive powers at the disposal of military regimes has ensured some measure of stability. But this has not put an end to religious crises as they have even become more frequent and violent in recent times (Mimiko & Adeyemi, 2005:57).

There was also some potentially integrative cross-cultural programmes like the National Youth Service Corps Scheme (NYSC) for graduate of tertiary institutions. These are expected to serve the nation in several capacities and in different parts of the country other than their own state. There is the National Sports Festival held among the different states of the federation. But arguably, these are mere cosmetic arrangements which are definitely too adventitious to ensure lasting unity. The fundamental issues of mistrust and intolerance among the various ethnic nationalities still very much defines the nature of political engagements in Nigeria. More importantly, the 'centrist federalism in practice in Nigeria has done more harm than good' there is structural imbalance as well as inequality. The centre has been made very strong at the expense of the constituent states, which should have been coordinates (rather than subordinates) of the centre (Mimiko & Adeyemi, 2005:57 – 58).

The country has continued to witness unhealthy inter-ethnic relations as well as inter-sectional and inter-religious disharmony. In essence, decades after independence, Nigeria has not yet been

able to harness its diversities and effectively deploy them for optimal national development. A consequence of these developments has been the inability to consolidate the process of nationhood. Understandably, a basic problem confronting ethnically diverse countries is how to have the citizens imbued with a sense of nationality, ensure the attenuation of solidarity along primordial lines and foster increased loyalty to the nation, give to each citizens and group a sense of belonging and feeling of oneness among them: in essence, how to ensure national integration (Obiyan, 2010:293 – 294).

However, Osaghae (2006:5) notes, and rightly too, that the mere fact that a country is diverse does not necessarily make it divided, troublesome or difficult to manage. He elucidates that a lot depends on the configuration of power, number and extent of equality or inequality among constituent groups, and why and how differences are mobilized and politicised to articulate grievances, seek redress and make contesting nationalist claims and demands including recognition and protection of identity (culture, language, religion) self-determination and political autonomy, on the state and other groups within it.

The underlying problem inhibiting Nigeria's national integration is the absence of 'self-sufficient political/ideological commitment to the primary concept or value of federalism itself' (Frank, 1968: 171). This is what Ayoade (Osaghae, 1984:143) calls "commitment to the ideology of federalism', or what Friedrich (1963:175) calls "federal spirit". Thus, Nigeria's political practice seems to be antithetical to the spirit of federalism.

As posited by Emeka Anyaoku, (Thisday, 2001:40) a former secretary-General of the commonwealth:

At the heart of the several conflicts plaguing the Nigerian state today is the consequence of the failure of the practice of true federalism. The power –shift debate that characterized the politics of transition from military to civil rule and which has persisted several months after, rose largely out of the frustration of large segments of the population with the structure of the political system that has shut significant sections out of the corridors of power for most of the post-independence period.

Conceptual Discourses

Defining national integration, Weiner (1965; 58) opines national integration to mean specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminate or subordinate parochial loyalties.

According to Ikime (1985), national integration is a process of cohesion between, two or more social units, whereby these units came together to constitute a political whole which include among other things the joining of various parts of society into a functioning whole, the growth of obedience and loyalty to its parts and emergence of shared national values. It follows, that Nigeria would have received national unity where obedience and loyalties to the Nigerian state, transcend loyalties to its parts.

To Ake (1967:3), “integration is defined by the extent that the minimal units (individual political actor) develop in the course of political interaction a pool of behavior patterns legitimized by these norms.

However, from Nnonyelu (1997:145) perspective, national integration is determined by the degree to which members and groups in plural society adapt to the demands of national existence while co-existing harmoniously Citizens are expected to respect the over-riding supremacy of the national government. National integration therefore is the bringing together of all divergent culture and groups so that they can work together. It is the process of making all the fragmented segments in a state to become accepted as a member of a social whole. In other words, this simply mean galvanizing unity in diversity for the development of the entire country.

Duverger (1976) defines integration along the line of conflict. According to him: “national integration appears to be the final result of political antagonism”. He goes further to argue that some scholars believe that conflict and integration are not opposites but that “Conflict naturally leads to integration and antagonisms tend, by their very development, to self-elimination and the subsequent bringing about of social harmony”. Having explained what necessitates integration, Duverger (1976:220) explain further what integration is. In his words, it is “the establishment of a closer interdependence between the parts of a living organism or between the members of a society”. In a nutshell, integration to him can be defined as “the process of unifying a society which tends to make it harmonious, based upon an order by members regard as equitably harmonious.

On the other hand, according to Javaid (2010), insurgency:

Is an organized, armed political struggle whose goal may be the seizure of power through revolutionary takeover and replacement of the existing government.

But, the perspective put to the complex but simple definition of insurgency by Aderinto (2014) is more apt to this discussion. In his view, insurgency is:

The inability of government to meet Nigerian's basic needs such as security, good roads, water, health, reliable power supply, employment and education which gave rise to frustration and alienation that make sympathy for terrorism seem acceptable.

Theoretical Perspective

The study adopts Social Identity Theory as basis of analyses. Social identity is the knowledge that (one) belongs to certain social group together with some emotional and value significance of ... the group membership (Tajfal, 1972).

Social identity theory begins with the assumption that individuals exist in a society composed of many social categories that stand in relative power and status relationship to each other (Emily & Nadine, 2007). Social identity theory seems to have emerged from the writings of collectivist theorists such as David Emile Durkheim and William, M.C. Dongall and it is the portion of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in social groups. Although social categories vary in terms of their scope and duration (e.g. from long-standing geopolitical nations to temporary work groups), all social categories have the potential to shape a person's self-concept (Turner, 1987).

When individuals define themselves in terms of their belonging to a social category, a social identity is formed. Researchers developing and using social identity theory largely have focused on social identity processes in terms of their consequences for intergroup relations, such as stereotyping and prejudice (Hogg , 1995). The theory itself constitutes a more general framework on group mediated social identity theory has relevance for exploring process through which religious participation might promote individual psychology (Emily & Nadine, 2007).

This theory states that, in every social relationship in which one person is dependent upon another, power is involved. Its major prepositions, according to its foremost theorist, Richard Emerson (1962:32), are as follows:

That “the dependence of Actor A upon B” is:

- (a) directly proportional to A’s motivational investment in the goals mediated by B; and
- (b) inversely proportional to the availability of A to achieve his goals outside of the A – B relationship.

The social identity theory is appropriate for the analysis of power relations. It proposes that social relationships involve an exchange of social commodities, which may or may not be desired by individuals. Such commodities include information, power, influence, hatred, love, acceptance, rejection, etc. Individuals involved in social relationship are rational beings who calculate and juxtapose their rewards or dividends with their investment of resources in a relations. If, on the other hand, it is negative, he either discontinues or alters the relationship to a more favourable one (Olaoye, 2012:17). Viewed in this perspective, French and Bell (1992:281) argues: “giving someone power over us is the commodity we exchange when we are dependent on that particular person for something we want”.

Boko Haram and the Challenge of National Integration

Undoubtedly, Nigeria is a plural and segmented society in all its ramifications. It is a country of 350,668sq milas and about 400 ethnic groups and nationalistic subscribing to a multiplicity of religions fautus in a secular context. The country is indeed a complex country par excellence (Agbaje, 1999: 91). According to Suberu (1998: 277), Nigeria is a one of the most ethnically diverse countries in all regions and climes of the world, and some of the ethnic groups are bigger than many states of contemporary Africa. In other words, Nigeria is essentially a plural society, its component groups are separated apart from each other by significant difference of language, ethnicity, and cultures of Nigeria created differences in attitude, outlook and character. Faced with these problems, Nigeria adopted federalism as a means of achieving its much needed goal of national integration. The federalism is adopted is expected to reduce the immensely aggressive

inter-ethnic competition and tension, allay the usually alleged fear of domination, bringing government nearer to the people and give the different groups more opportunities, thereby integrating the country.

National integration is relation to national development. It usually constitutes a platform for national development. Development can only be achieved in an atmosphere of cooperation and unity where citizens feel a sense of belonging and wants to contributes his own quota to the development of national goal. According to Aboyade (1976) in his book, issues in the development of tropical Africa, he observed that development is essentially a continuous process of generating and more efficiently allocating resources for achieving greater social satisfying ends. While political development relates to the overall capacity of a people to govern them efficiently, this ability to govern relates to the capacity to extract resources, make and regulate behaviours. It also means the ability to resolve societal problems and manage conflicts. If the society is able to do all these things mentioned, it will certainly lead to economic development for that nation. Contrarily, as posited by Ezech (1998: 16) in a situation where the state has failed to coordinate the governance process, provide for the citizenry, and sustain the democratization process, conflict becomes inevitable. He argues further that:

In a situation of generalized violence and ravages, with no state structures to protect individuals and groups, it must be expected that some social structures would emerge to provide some degree of protection. This degree of protection may become conflictual.

For a nation to successfully harness her abundant resources, there must be a secure and conducive atmosphere. It is in recognition of this that the preservation of the sovereignty of the country and the integrity of her assets is vital. It is therefore necessary to note that the primary objective of national security is to strengthen and secure the nation, advance her interests and objectives, cultail instability in whatever form, control crime, eliminate corruption, enhance genuine development, progress, growth and improved welfare and well-being of every citizens (Nlame, 2011: 221)

Boko Haram, a pejorative name that the *Jama'at Ahlis – sunna Lid- Da'awat wal – Jihad* (group committed to propagating the prophet's teachings and Jihad) bears in Nigeria, is a combination

of Hausa and Arabic languages that, literally, translates into “Western education is forbidden”. The group started as an Islamic sect with a puritanical, conservative literalist approach to Islamic theology sometimes in 2002 in Maiduguri, the north – eastern part of Nigeria (Katisna, 2011: 28)

Thus, the emergence of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria is a direct consequence of government failure to provide the basic human needs of the citizenry. The indicators of this failure include the prevalence of abject and dehumanizing poverty, bad governance, high rate of unemployment, hunger and disease, rising tides of social unrest which have created the breeding group for the dreaded sect who are believed to be committed to the propagation of prophet Mohammad’s teachings and jihad. The origin and founder of *Boko Haram* is shrouded in uncertainty to some individual. Some scholars trace the origin of the sect to 1995 with Lawan Abubakar as its founder. It was when Abubakar left for further studies in Saudi Arabia that the sect then known as Sahaba that Muhammed Yusuf who is also regarded as the leader, took over the affairs of the sect. others trace the sect founder to Shehu Sanni, a civil right activity in Northern Nigeria. Apart from the above, numerous expositions on the origin and founder of *Boko Haram* abound. It was under the leadership of the slain Mallan Muhammed Yusuf that *Boko Haram* became radicalized and enjoyed foreign collaboration especially with the Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb.

Mohammed Yusuf (January 29th 1970 – July 30th, 2009) the founder of *Boko Haram* was born in Yobe State. As a student of Shaikh Gumi, he was a dedicated Salafi and was also deeply influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah. Yusuf’s movement developed after 2002 and was successful enough to invest in educational infrastructure and other facilities in a neighbourhood of Maiduguri. In 2009, the army surrounded and attacked the movement’s facilities, crushing it (using tanks) and killing Yusuf later in a police cell. This major blow pushed the movement to transform itself into a network of underground cells with a hidden leadership – a situation that today makes any military solution illusory (Marchal, 2012:3)

The group is credited to be the most dreadful of all the armed militia groups in Nigeria with links with al-Qaeda. Since 2009, the group has claimed responsibility for several deadly attacks in the country. The group attacks targets state, federal and international organizations such as the United Nations. Also targeted are civilians, churches, mosques and travellers. Banks and motor parts also vulnerable (Iorhen, Tersoo & Member 2014:72)

The situation would not have been what it is today if not for the extra-judicial killings carried out by government. Whilst *Boko-Haram* started as a non-violent breakaway group, persecution and aggressive crack-down from the security services brought about their violent response. *Boko Haram* was at first a small and controllable problem, but the issue escalated in 2009 after heavy crackdowns were ordered by President Yar'Adua. The crackdown was brutal and disproportionate; around 700 innocent people were killed, some of them publicly executed in suspicions that they were Boko Haram (Sani, 2012). The killing of their leader, Mohammed Yusuf actually made the group increase its rate of violent activities (Ajah, 2011). Following the killing of year later with renewed attacks. Even at this point, the situation was controllable, yet the government response was again heavy-handed. Local people felt more intimidated by the soldiers deployed to fight *Boko Haram*, than they did of Boko Haram. This sentiment was compounded by the violent and indiscriminate responses of the security forces, which frequently caused the destruction of property and the loss of innocent lives.

The Muslim – Christian conflict as framed by *Boko Haram* is primarily political. It relies on many different aspects. One is the staunch competition between evangelical churches and Islam in central Nigeria (Jos being the epi centre). Another is the impact that decentralization has had in the region, often increasing differences between communities: resentment is rooted in the perception that other communities get more than they deserve. This hostility has been reinforced by the 2011 elections outcome, which was criticized by many experts. The success of Goodluck – Jonathan (after two terms of Olusegun Obasanjo – a Christian – and the death of Umaru Yar'Adua – a Muslim) and the domination of his People's Democratic Party (PDP) generated bitterness in the Northern population for whom those victories threatened increased marginalization. This feeling is reinforced by the arrangements of the peace-settlement with the rebel group movements for emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) that allocated, in the Northern view, disproportionate resources to an underpopulated, but Christian area of the south. (Marchal, 2012:4)

The infiltration of the group into government showed the seriousness of the challenge posed by the *Boko Haram* a sect to national security and the survival of Nigeria as a corporate entity. It is a truism that without security hardly is anything possible. The insecurity situation in the country consequent upon the *Boko Haram* violence has led many to wonder if Nigeria has not returned to

that historical epoch known as “state of nature” where according to Thomas Hobbes in Appadorai (1974), “life was solitary, hasty, brutish and short”. The severe security threats to life and property posed by *Boko Haram* across the country send wrong signals to the international community that Nigeria was not safe for investment. This is because insecurity is a risk factor, which investors dread and makes them to move elsewhere. In a candid opinion of the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Abubakar Sa’ad II (2012) the members of *Boko Haram* are civil men, and he argued that maladministration was the harbinger that brought them about. Speaking largely the minds of Muslims, dialogue and amnesty are the only ways out of the threat posed to all Nigerians by *Boko Haram* (Daily Independent, 2013).

With *Boko Haram*, terrorism breaking some of the worst form of death and destruction man has ever known on the North, militant agitation straining virtually every cord of national unity in the south, and harsh economic conditions getting even the most laidback of citizens more and more agitated, Nigeria is truly a troubled country. But optimism and belief that the troubles with Nigeria is mostly man-made and can, thus, be redeemed by a change of attitude are what have marked the character of the citizens in the face of all the adversity (Obia, 2016:69). Pathetically, politicians have been feasting on it to the detriment of national unity and cohesion. The 2012 attack on luxurious buses that were Eastern Nigeria bound during the Christmas Festival in Kano was read differently by Nigerians. For some, the terrorist attack was premeditated and it was targeted against the Igbos. Some others have read religious motives into it. The July, 2013 attack on some Yoruba traders in Maiduguri also generated disquiet in the South-West, posing a threat to Nigerian unity. One immediate duplication that can be drawn so far is that the thread of unity in Nigeria is being given a terrible blow by the unrestrained activities of the sect. The high number of deaths recorded among the southerners who live in the affected areas is encouraging discussion on reprisal attacks in some other parts of Nigeria. The country’s unity and existence is daily assaulted by *Boko Haram* (Saliu, 2016: 225)

The cloud of uncertainty threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria, as a result of *Boko Haram* insurgency can be summed up with the opening verse of Charles Dickens Famous novel *A tale of two cities*:

...it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age
of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief,

it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us.

Already, the political temperature has risen due to the patterns of reaction to the menace. For the leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the sect is a terrorist group that requires no sympathy. Negotiation with it is therefore not fancied by the Association. Its preferred option is to defeat the group militarily. The options of amnesty and dialogue being considered by the government were clearly detested by the apex Christian Association of Nigeria (Oritsejafor, 2012).

However, as in other faiths, there are, of course, extremist elements in Islam who will in the name of Islam commit vile acts of terror against others (and often against Muslims who oppose them). Prophet Muhammad had in fact predicted the recurring appearance throughout the ages of these elements in the Muslim community. These elements are called the *Khawaarij* (those who exit the religion), and contemporary scholars have identified groups like A1 – Qaidah and *Boko Haram* sects as the *Khawaarij* of this period. A description of these elements is given in a report from the third *Khalifah* of Islam, Ali bn Talib:

“Ali said, ‘O people! Indeed, the messenger of God say: There shall be a folk that comes from my Ummah and they will recite the Qur’an – your recitation will not be comparable to theirs, or your prayers or fasting to theirs. They will recite the Qur’an and believe it supports them but (in reality) it is against them. Their prayers will not go past their throats. They will exit from the religion just as an arrow exits from a hunted game.

Towards Engendering Unity and National Integration

Nigeria attained the status of an independence country fifty six years ago. Today, the country is still confronted with many problems associated with political development. Understandably, countries face several crises in the drive towards nationhood. And, as has been rightly observed by the International Social Science Research Council, all countries tend to experience four basic challenges of political development. These challenges are: the challenge of authority or state building; the challenge of unity or nation building; the challenge of participation; and the challenge of distribution. While, indeed, countries may be faced with these challenges in the

process of political development, the tragedy of the Nigerian case is that, half a century after attaining independence, not only have we been unable to reach a broad consensus on how these challenges should be dealt with, they appear to be intractable (Obiyan, 2010:293).

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Boko Haram, the Militant group operating in Northern Nigeria has been described by many people in the religion as a collection of different interests ranging from religious zealists to political operators, and common criminals. Muslims have been affected by *Boko Haram* attacks as much as (if not more) than other communities in Northern Nigeria. In addition, law-enforcement has also shown that some of the terrorist violence in the north have been carried out by non-Muslims. Thus the Boko Haram threat has severe implications, not only for the Nigerian civilians population but also for the country's economy, political stability as well as its development. The emergence of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria is a direct consequence of nature and character of the Nigerian State.

Beyond military action to curtain, degrade and defeat Boko Haram, there is also the need to address underlying conditions that these groups seek to exploit. The conditions include poverty, unemployment, deprivation, illiteracy, social disenfranchisement and unresolved political and ethnic disputes. The Nigerian state should desist from addressing the symptom instead of the causes. The immediate solution is good governance with a robust institutional framework that ensures a prudent and effective management of resources to better the lot of its citizenry. To achieve this, there should be reprioritization of government expenditure in favour of poverty allocation measures including the creation of job opportunities and other welfare packages.

The Nigerian state should build strong viable institutions that can proactively respond to the challenges of security. Security just like other elements in the business environment enhances and optimizes business activities but insecurity hinders these activities and so it constitutes a threat to business organizations. There is a strong skepticism that if the level of insecurity in our country is not scaled down, our vision to be among the best 20 countries of the world may be aborted.

The government, as a matter of urgency, puts an end to the culture of entrenched impurity and human right abuses; pursuing vigorous reforms of the judicial of civilian populations by improve the capacities of law enforcement agencies.

The government at all levels must encourage and facilitate dialogue among culture and religious groups on national issues with a view to understand and find a lasting solution to some of the contextual issues in the country.

Nonetheless, it has become obvious that Nigeria cannot make any meaningful progress in the absence of unity. Some founding fathers of Nigeria adopted federalism as a pragmatic instrument for the achievement of the goal of national unity. The rationale was to see if there could be unity in diversity which means that there could be ways of bringing diverse ethnic groups into a modern nation. As argued by Jinadu (1979, 2007):

... it is usually built as a form of government and constitutional structure deliberately designed by political architects to cope with the different task of maintaining unity, while preserving diversity.

However, amidst all the efforts, the goals of national integration are not yet possible owing to the numerous problems inherent in Nigeria federalism.

Unity, peace and progress are the central theme on the Nigeria's coat of arms. The words were carefully selected as Nigeria's heritage to project national watch-word towards sustainable development and a virile nation devoid of rancor and violence, however, documented instances have shown that heterogeneity of Nigeria in term of myriad or religio-cultural backgrounds had seldom operated on the platform of negative interaction. The ethno-religious crises witnessed by the country have increasingly threatened the corporate existence of Nigeria as a country. Seeds of religious discords have been hypocritically nurtured at geometric rate through political propaganda and tribal affinity. These have caused intermittent conflicts and state of insecurity in the country.

Nigerians are on a daily basis striving to come up with ideas for the renewal of faith in themselves and their country. The World Peace Day, marked on Wednesday 21st September 2016, signals a strategic moment for deeper reflection by Nigerians on the things that have damaged relations, sowed fear, heightened suspicion, and distributed the peace among the citizens.

Fortunately, it coincides with the period for Nigeria's 56th independence anniversary, which another important time for critical thinking on the country's journey so far. The World Peace Day could not have come at a more opportune period. Celebrated worldwide on September 21 every year to remember the virtues of peace and good neighbourliness among the world's diverse people, the day was established in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly. In 2001, the General Assembly voted to designate the day as a time of non-violence and cessation of hostilities. This year's World Peace Day holds a special significance for Nigeria. It offers an important opportunity for Nigerians to step up actions to dismantle anti-peace barriers that have been erected over the years by politics and dogmatism (Obia, 2016:69).

Dialogue as applicable to religion is an ecumenical strategy to bring people of different faiths together on the platform of peaceful co-existence and interaction.

The goal of establishing greater peace, stability and unity in the country would be well served if the devoted followers of the religions are: one, view their collective insights as multiple pathways to understanding ultimate reality, and; two, commit to identifying through open dialogue their combined, although individually limited, truths.

The political leaders, too, need to be more attentive to the needs, aspirations, and complaints of the people, for the country to enjoy the permanent peace that everyone craves. Dialogue should always be the primary tool of engagement with people and groups having divergent views on how society should be run. It is only dialogue that can bring peace based on consent – which is the authentic peace that the country needs. Peace achieved through force is more often than not weak and uncertain (Obia, 2016:69).

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